

A
C A V E A T

Against the New SECT of

ANABAPTISTS,

Lately sprung up at

E X O N.

Shewing the Novelty and Schism, the Absurdity
and dangerous Tendency of their Principles
and Practices, who were concerned in the
Rebaptization of Mr. *Benjamin Read*.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

by *James Keirce.*

*Vos non dicitis, quid accepistis, sed a quo accepistis: & insectamini
personas hominum, & vultis iterare quod semel est. Optat. de
Schismate Donatist. Lib. 5. Sect 5.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN CLARK, at the Bible and Crown
in the Old-Change near St. Paul's. 1714.

Price Four Pence.

CAVEAT

Avert the Power of

ANABAPTIST

Light-throwing up at

EX N.



Showing the Novelty and Schism, the Abundance
and dangerous Tendency of their Principles
and Practices, who were concerned in the
Reparation of Mr. Benjamin Read.

In a Letter to a Friend.

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A N A B A P T I S T S,

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S I R,



HAVE receiv'd yours, in which you desire me to give you some Account of the Rebaptization of a young Man at *Exeter*, which has been so much talk'd of in most parts of the Kingdom. I am glad that I am in some tolerable Measure capable of satisfying your Curiosity; for having lately been in that City I have made a particular Enquiry into the Circumstances of this odd Affair. The Matter of Fact is this:

One Mr. *Benjamin Read* of the City of *Exeter*, was design'd for a Dissenting Minister, his Parents gave him a suitable Education, and he was for several Years at a private Academy; all this time he seem'd to be a resolute-

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lute Nonconformist, but about two or three Months since he left the Dissenters, and on a sudden declar'd himself a zealous Churchman: This Trifle would never have been talk'd of, had it not been for one of the most ridiculous Circumstances you was ever acquainted with; the Dissenters did not sink under the mighty Loss, nor have the Churchmen any great Reason to value themselves upon their new Convert. The Principles of human Actions are unknown, and St. *Paul* forbids us to judge another Man's Servant, since 'tis to his own Master that he must stand or fall. It becomes us then to think as favourably of this young Man's Conduct as we can, and to hope that he acted according to the Dictates of his own Conscience, and that his Conscience was inform'd from another Principle than his secular Interest: But the World is so very uncharitable, that I am afraid he will find it a little difficult to persuade Persons, that the Favour of a rich Aunt, from whom he had greater Expectations than from his Parents, was not a very weighty Argument to prevail with him to conform. A little after he conform'd he was persuaded to renounce his former Baptism as absolutely null and invalid, because it was administer'd by one who was not Episcopally ordain'd; he submitted to be rebaptiz'd, and the Sacrament was solemnly repeated in the Parish-Church of *Heavytree*, within a Mile of *Exeter*: The Person that officiated was one Mr. *Jenkinson*, who might have pass'd his Life in Obscurity if he had not made himself famous, for having somewhat to do in so remarkable an Affair. The Godfathers were two Clergy-men, Mr. *King* and Mr. *J. Walker*; these Reverend Divines are suppos'd to have been the chief Promoters of this scandalous Novelty. 'Tis no wonder that this Affair has made so much Noise, for what can be more shocking than for Men in Holy Orders to promote and encourage a Practice so inconsistent with their own Prayers, so contrary to the Sense of the whole Christian World, and which renders the Christianity of the Members of their own Church so very precarious.

I cannot find upon Enquiry, that this Affair has created any great Uneasiness in the Minds of the Dissenters, they laugh at the Bigotry, and pity the Uncharitableness of those who were concerned in it. They seem to be
fully



fully satisfy'd of the Validity of their Baptism, and make no Question, but that, if by the Grace of God they are enabled to live righteous, sober and godly Lives, they stand entitled to all the Benefits of the New Covenant. Their Ministers, they say, are ordain'd as *Timothy* was, by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, or a Company of Men call'd Presbyters, or Elders (as the Word in the Original every where signifies.) Tho' the Dissenters, and those who reject this strange Doctrine, may be easy, yet those who believe it must be startl'd sure at turning so many thousands of their own Church out of the Christian Pale, and rendring their own Christianity so very precarious and uncertain. I have, according to your Desire, made a few Remarks upon this Affair, to let you see the Absurdity, the Singularity and Uncharitableness of such a Practice, and you may communicate them to as many as you think fit.

In order to form a true Notion of this Matter, you are to consider, that in the Sense and Apprehension of the Church of *England*, Baptism is that sacred and solemn Rite, by which Persons are initiated into the Christian Church, or which is the same thing, are made Christians. Thus in the 27th Article, 'tis defin'd, "to be a Principle of Regeneration, whereby, as by an Instrument, they that rightly receive it are grafted into the Church. This is an Argument, that before the Administration of this Sacrament they are presumed to be out of the Church : And in the publick Office of Baptism, both for Infants and Persons of riper Years, the Minister addresses himself to the People in these following Words : *Dearly beloved----- I beseech you to call upon God the Father, that he will grant that this Person may be baptized with Water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy Church.* A plain Intimation, that hitherto he is look'd upon as one out of it. Thus in our Catechism Children are taught to say, that in their Baptism they are made *Members of Christ*, or his Mystical Body, that is in other Terms Christians. These things premised, I come to represent unto you the desperate Tendency of that Doctrine, which these Sectaries have endeavour'd to obtrude upon the World.

I. The annulling all Baptisms perform'd by a Presbyterian Minister, is a thing directly contrary to the Practice

Office and Opinion of the Catholick Church. 'Tis a Novelty which the Christian World scarce ever heard of before. 'Tis a Tare but just now sown in the Field, which, if let alone, may be of dangerous Consequence. Both *Greeks* and *Latins*, *Protestants* and *Papists*, do all concur in the Validity of such a Baptism, though some judge it to be irregular. Mr. *Read* is the second Instance of this Nature that can be produc'd, I dare say, for more than a thousand Years. I own, with *Tertulian*, that Custom against Truth is *Heresy* (a). But then, he that pretends to contradict the whole World, had need be very sure of the Principles he proceeds upon. A modest Man will be apt to distrust himself when his Opinion clashes and interferes with that of all the good and learned part of Mankind. 'Tis true, a single *Luther* may begin a glorious Reformation, and when our new Sectaries can produce as plain Texts of Scripture against a Presbyterian Baptism, as he could against the selling of Indulgences, the Invocation of Saints, the worshipping of Images and other Papal Corruptions, they may then cite him as a Precedent; but till they can do this, the Example of that great Reformer can be no Justification of 'em. In the mean time, the Sense and Practice of all the Churches upon the Face of the Earth must be a mighty Prejudice against the Opinion of this upstart Sect.

II. This Practice of Rebaptizing is most directly contrary to the Sense of the establish'd Church of *England*, and to those Measures which she has constantly pursued ever since the Reformation of Religion. Our Novelists indeed will call themselves the most dutiful Sons of the Church, and at the same time spit in the very Face of their Holy Mother, and trample upon the Ashes of those reverend Fathers, who were the Honour and Ornament of the Age in which they liv'd. Our Bishops and Doctors who have hitherto been famous for their Learning, were in their Opinion, so very ignorant in the Mysteries of their own Profession, that they understood not what was essential and absolutely necessary to the very Being of a Christian. 'Tis strange that our ho-

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(a) *Quodcumque adversus veritatem sapit, Hoc erit Heresim etiam Vetus Consuetudo.* Tertull. de Virgin. veland.

ly Church so pure in Faith and Order, should till now have been ignorant of such an important Truth : That it should have call'd Heathens Brethren, and consecrated those to serve at her sacred Altars who were no Christians; happy is it for her that Mr. *Walker* and Mr. *Jenkinson*, these great and shining Lights are at length risen, to lead her out of so dangerous an Error. Can there be a greater Indignity offer'd to the Church, than for two or three busy Presbyters to refine upon it in such an important Point? Now that the Establish'd Church allows the Validity of such a Baptism as the *Exeter* Convert has been persuaded to renounce, is evident, and may be proved by its Canons, its Publick Prayers, and the constant Practice of its Bishops and Priests.

1. The Validity of such a Baptism may be prov'd by the 55th Canon, which peremptorily enjoyns all Preachers before their Sermons, to pray in so many Words for Christ's holy Catholick Church : and especially for the Churches of *England*, *Scotland* and *Ireland*. Now in the Year 1603, when these Canons were compiled, all the Baptisms and Ordinations in *Scotland* were according to the Presbyterian Model, and had been so for many Years before : And yet the Church of *England* commands all its Clergy to pray for the *Scots* as a part of Christ's holy Catholick Church, which it could not possibly do, unless it supposed them to be Christians. I must leave it to your Consideration, whether these Gentlemen have acted a sincere Part, who first swore Obedience to this very Canon, and have since given Countenance to an Action, that must be look'd upon as a scandalous and open Defiance of it.

2. That the Church of *England* allows those baptiz'd by *Presbyterians* to be Christians, is evident by her publick Offices and Forms of Devotion. As we have had frequent Occasions in this Queen's Reign to observe Days of Thanksgiving, so for each of these, Forms of Prayer have been composed and distributed to every Parish. Amongst the rest, we have constantly had one or two Collects, for the reformed Churches abroad, or beyond the Seas, We had one of this Nature on the last Thanksgiving Day for the Peace, which Her Majesty has obtain'd for Her Kingdoms. Now, Sir, there is not one of all the Protestants

testant Churches on t'other Side the Water, that has any other than a Presbyterian Baptism and Ordination. 'Tis true, the *Lutherans* have, in some Places, Bishops and Superintendents ; but not one of them pretends to an uninterrupted Succession from the Apostles. Their first Bishops, on their renouncing Popery, were ordain'd by *Luther*, *Melancthon*, *Bugenhagen* (a), and other meer Presbyters; and by consequence could convey no other than a Presbyterian Ordination to such as now succeed them : And if the Divines, and learned Men of *Germany* deserve any Credit, the Papists do at present, for this very Reason, insult all the *Lutherans* as meer usurping Laymen (b), and deny the Truth of their Ministry (c). However, the Jesuits themselves are in this Respect more charitable than our new Sectaries, in that they allow the Validity of their Baptism, which these deny. But to return to the Church of *England*, 'tis plain, she has been inspir'd with more noble Sentiments, in that she obliges all her Sons to pray for the foreign Protestants, as so many Churches of Christ, which necessarily supposes them to be baptized Christians : But I am yet to seek with what Conscience *Mr. Read's* Godfathers could read these Prayers the other Day, when their uncharitable Scheme has set them upon the same Footing with unbaptized Pagans.

3. We may judge of the Church of *England's* Sense of such a Baptism by her Conduct from the time of her Reformation to this very Moment. I hope you will allow me, that Mens Principles may be best judg'd of by their constant Practice. If therefore the Bishops of the Church, and the generality of the Clergy, have, in all their Administrations, acted as if a Presbyterian Baptism were valid, we may reasonably infer, that they really thought it to be so. Now, that their Practice has been founded upon this Supposition, and can stand upon no other, will appear by these following Instances.

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(a) *Melchior. Adamus in Vit. Bugenha.*

(b) *Pontificii, cum Lutheranos omnes pro laicis habeant. Joachim Hild. de Hierarch. Vet. Eccles. p. 78, printed at Helmstat. 1702.*

(c) *Ex hoc Capite Ministerii Lutherani Veritatem impugnant. Osiand. Theolog. casual. pt. c. 2. pr. 1681.*

1. Such as have had no other than a Presbyterian Ordination have been allow'd publickly to officiate as Ministers in the Church of *England*. Of this we have a remarkable Instance presented to the World by Mr. *Strype*, in the Life of Archbishop *Grindal*. 'Tis that of Mr. *John Morrison* a *Scotchman*, who had a Licence granted him to preach, and administer the Sacraments, in any Place where he should be lawfully call'd, throughout the Province of *Canterbury*; and yet in the same License 'tis expressly said of him, that he was ordain'd by the *General Synod*, (or *Presbytery*) of *Garvet* in the Kingdom of *Scotland*, according to the laudable Custom of that Church (a). An undeniable Argument, that such an Ordination was then esteemed valid by our *English* Prelates, however it may be now exclaim'd against and vilified. 'Tis true, since the Restoration, Episcopal Orders have been made necessary to qualify a Man for any Ecclesiastical Preferment whatsoever: But from the Beginning it was not so.

2. Such as have had a Presbyterian Baptism in their Infancy have been allow'd Episcopal Confirmation when they come to riper Years, as often as they have desired it. This was the Condition of thousands in every Diocese in 1660, when the Bishops found themselves re-established in their respective Sees, after a long Suspension from their Office: This is the Case of Multitudes, who have been born of dissenting Parents since: Yet never could I hear of one single Bishop, who refused to confirm such as were presented to him, upon the Account of a supposed Nullity in their Baptism. And is there any Prelate in *England*, who dares lay his Hands on any one that he believes an unbaptized Person? To affirm this, wou'd be to charge them with acting contrary to those very Rubricks to which, with all Solemnity, they have promis'd to conform themselves. If you consult the Office of Confirmation in the *Common-Prayer Book*, you will find it carrying this Title: "The Order of Confirmation, or laying on of Hands upon those that are baptized, and come to Years of Discretion. This Office you see is confin'd to baptized Persons,

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Persons,

(a) Appendix to Archbishop *Grindal's* Life. p. 101.

Persons, all others are peremptorily excluded : This is that Rule by which all that minister in holy Things are obliged to regulate their Conduct. Again, in the Prayer which the Bishop puts up to God, he uses this Expression: " Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy Servants by Water and the Holy Ghost, &c. Now, to be regenerated by Water is the same thing as to be baptiz'd : And their Lordships could never make such an Acknowledgment to the Searcher of Hearts, were they not perswaded in their own Consciences, that the Baptism of those on whom they lay their Hands was valid and authentick. To affirm the contrary would be to suppose them acting in Contradiction to their own Prayers, and the Rules to which they have vow'd a strict Conformity.

3. As Persons who have only had a Presbyterian Baptism have been confirm'd by our Bishops, so, they have been admitted to the Communion of the Church, and that in almost all our Parishes; nor did I ever hear of any Clergyman who made a Scruple of it. The Church of *England*, like an indulgent Mother, stands with her extended Arms, ready to receive and embrace all such as will return to her Communion. Now, from the beginning of Christianity to this very Day, no Instance can be given of any who have been allow'd to partake of the *Eucharist*, before they have been wash'd in the Laver of Regeneration. And in our *English* Liturgy you will find this Rubrick in the Office of Confirmation: " There shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion till such time as he be confirm'd, or ready to be confirm'd. Now, as I have already observ'd, he that never was baptized cannot be ready for Confirmation, much less for full Communion with our Church. 'Tis but 53 Years since Monarchy and Episcopacy were restor'd to this Nation, and how many thousand Communicants have you, who exceed that Age, and by consequence were born and baptized, whilst Presbyterians were possess'd of the publick Churches? How many others who have been born of dissenting Parents since, and have thought fit, as they grew up, to leave their Meetings, and be reconciled to the Church? This is an undeniable Argument, that both Bishops and Clergy have constantly look'd upon such as these to be sufficiently

ently baptized. And must not our Novellists be a Club of very modest Gentlemen, when they oppose their own particular Whimsies to the general Sense of their more reverend Fathers and Brethren?

4. A Fourth Instance I shall present you with in Proof of my Assertion is this: A great many Persons, who have had no other Baptism than such, as by our new Sectaries is pretended to be null, have been by our Bishops admitted to holy Orders, and are at this Day officiating as Priests and Deacons in the Church. And would our venerable Prelates, think you, lay Hands upon a parcel of unbaptized Pagans? Would they make a Minister of one who was no Christian? or indeed is it possible for them to do it if they would? Was there ever such a Monster seen in the Christian World, except perhaps amongst a few wild Enthusiasts who have rejected all the Ordinances and Institutions of the Gospel? Is there ever a Diocese in which there are not several of the Clergy, who were born before the Restoration in 1660, or of dissenting Parents since? and must all these be reckon'd amongst *Jews* and *Heathens*? must all their Administrations be made void and null? We do indeed read of St. *Ambrose*, that he was chosen Bishop of *Millain* before his Baptism, having delay'd it upon some wrong Principles which were very prevalent in that Age (a); and the like of *Nectarius*, who in the same Circumstances was chosen Patriarch of *Constantinople*: But then they were both regularly baptized before their Consecration. And the Historian tells us, in relation to this latter, that *Diodorus*, who first mention'd him, would not have dared to have given his Suffrage for him, had he known him not to be initiated by that sacred Rite (b). When our Bishops confer holy Orders upon such as have no other than Presbyterian Baptism, (as they have done upon many, both of the *French* and *English* Nation) is not this an undeniable Argument, that they look upon them to be Christians?

5. I shall conclude my Evidence on this Head, with an express and formal Declaration, made by my Lords

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(a) *Vid. Paulinum de Vit. Ambros.* (b) *Vid. Zozome Hist. Eccles. l. 7, c. 8.*

the Bishops, upon a like Occasion with that now before us. There was one Mr. *Lawrence*, who had a Fancy to renounce his former Baptism, and he was encourag'd by a famous Nonjuring Dean and several others; the upper House of Convocation being sensible that such a Notion would be of dangerous Consequence, sent down this following Declaration to the lower House: "Forasmuch as diverse Persons have possess'd the Minds of many People in the Communion of our Church, with Doubts and Scruples about the Validity of their Baptism: We the President and Bishops ----- have thought it incumbent on us to declare, in Conformity with the Judgment and Practice of the Catholick Church of Christ, and of the Church of *England* in particular, that such Persons as have been already baptized in, or with Water, in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, though their Baptism was irregular for want of a proper Administrator, ought not to be baptiz'd again (*a*). This Declaration was made by them, as they profess, "to prevent Confusion, and to resist an Error, not much different from *Donatism* and *Anabaptism*. By the Instances I have produced, you may see what the Sense of the Church of *England* always has been, and what it is at present. By this you may perceive what a modest Generation of Men our modern Innovators are.

III. A Third Prejudice against this Practice of Rebaptizing is, that it is an Affront to the State, as well as to the Church. 'Tis in Truth, an Indignity to the Legislature; and a Reflection upon Queen, Lords and Commons; which I thus prove: All Persons in Places of Trust and Profit, are oblig'd, as you know very well, to take the Sacramental Test, as a Qualification for their respective Offices. Now Her Majesty has thought fit to advance some to the Highest Stations, who have had their Birth and Education in Dissenting Families. And these Gentlemen have had the good Fortune to be esteem'd the best Supporters both of Monarchy and Episcopacy. And 'tis not impossible but Her Majesty may employ others of the same Condition in Her Service. But if the Doctrine of

(*a*) Annals of Queen ANNE. Vol. II. p. 376.

of our Innovators gets Ground, She must first ask Leave of the Parson of the Parish. For if the Man who presents himself be no Christian, the Priest may be fairly justified, by the Rules and Canons of the Church, in refusing him the holy Sacrament; without which he is incapacitated for any Office. And if the Candidate for any Post may be kept off from the Communion, upon Pretence of an invalid Baptism, it will be in the Power of a few peevish Clergymen, to lay an Embargo on the Prerogative, and to prevent Her Majesty in the Distribution of her own Favours. If the Scheme which these Gentlemen have projected be according to Truth and the sacred Scripture, that Act of Parliament, which is now look'd upon as the Security and Bulwark of the Church, will be liable to very great Objections; for it should have obliged these Men to stand at the Font before they are permitted to kneel at the Altar. I presume this is enough to satisfy you, that the State is as little obliged to these Projectors, as the Church for those Discoveries which they have made.

IV. Another Objection against the Practice of our new Anabaptists is this: It robs King *Charles* the First of his Crown of Martyrdom, and blots his Name out of the *English* Kalendar; for this must be the necessary Consequence of invalidating his Baptism, and denying him to be a Christian. Now that he could have no other than a Presbyterian Baptism, will be evident almost to a Demonstration, if you consider the Time of his Nativity, with the state of Affairs both before and after it. He was born at *Dunfermling* in *Scotland*, in the Year 1600 (a); at which Time the Presbyterian Church Government was by Law establish'd in that Kingdom. He was privately baptized by reason of his Indisposition; but the Writers of his Life have not told us by whom. However, 'tis certain that the *Scotch* Ministers at that Time, had no other Ordination but what they receiv'd at the Hands of mere Presbyters. This is evident from the License granted to Mr. *John Morrison* by the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, which I have taken some Notice of before. In that Licence 'tis expressly said,
" That

(a) *Perrinchief* Life of King *Charles*,

“ That Mr. *Morrison* had been admitted to holy Orders
 “ about five Years since by the Synod (or Presbytery)
 “ of *Lothian* assembled in the Town of *Garvet*, accord-
 “ ing to the laudable Form and Rite of the reformed
 “ Church of *Scotland*, &c (a). This Licence bears
 Date *April 6, 1582*. We find in it that Mr. *Morrison*
 was ordain’d five Years before, that is in the Year 1577,
 and that according to the laudable Rites of the *Scottish*
Church. Hence it appears, beyond all Contradiction,
 that Ordination by Presbyters was the Custom or Usage
 in *Scotland* in 1577, that is, for three and twenty Years
 before the Birth of King *Charles*. In 1603 King *James* suc-
 ceeded Queen *Elizabeth* to the Crown of *England*; upon
 which he set up Episcopacy in his native Country: But
 the very Persons rais’d to this new Dignity, had no other
 than a Presbyterian Ordination (b). Upon the whole,
 by comparing one thing with another you will find,
 that for three and twenty Years before King *Charles*’s
 Birth, (and I doubt not but I may say, from the very
 Dawn of the Reformation) the *Scottish* Ministers had
 holy Orders conferr’d upon ’em by mere Presbyters:
 And that King *James* could find none but such to fill up
 the Episcopal Sees. Which puts the Matter beyond all
 Doubt, and proves that the *Royal Martyr* could have no
 other Baptism, but what our new Reformers condemn
 as absolutely null, and insufficient to denominate him a
 Christian.

V. I may add in the next Place, that this new Do-
 ctrine is an Affront to Her present Majesty, and arraigns
 Her Conduct. She was pleas’d, you know, to accept
 the Prince of *Denmark* for Her Royal Consort. Nor
 did She ever repent Her Choice: But during that Rela-
 tion, remain’d a most illustrious Instance of Conjugal
 Affection. We all look’d upon his Highness as a Vir-
 tuous, Religious Prince: But our new Reformers will
 not allow him to be a Christian. ’Tis true, the *Danish*
 Church is at this Day govern’d by Bishops: But they
 look upon Episcopacy only as an human Institution, and the

(a) Appendix to *Strype’s Life of Grindal*. p. 101.

(b) *Spotswood’s Hist.* p. 514

the first Protestant Prelates in that Kingdom were ordain'd by *Bugenhagius*, a mere Presbyter (a); and by consequence could convey no other than a Presbyterian Baptism and Ordination to their Countrymen and Successors ever since. So that this new Doctrine, of which I am writing, reflects Dishonour upon Her Majesty's Conduct, as having been *unequally yok'd*, and so acted in Defiance of an Apostolical Injunction.

VI. Another Objection against this new Scheme is, that it is plainly Schismatical, and involves the Projectors of it in the Guilt of so detested a Crime as that of *Schism*. It makes that very Arrow to recoil into their own Bosoms, which, with so much Spite and Animosity, they have been shooting at their dissenting Neighbours. 'Tis the Observation of our judicious *Stillingsfleet*: "That, whatever confines, must also divide the Church, for by that Confinement a Separation is made between the Party confin'd and the other; which Separation must be made by the Party so limiting Christian Communion (b). Let us therefore examine the Principles of our Rebaptizers by this Rule, and we shall find that they are the great Tearers and Confounders of the Church, by setting such Limits to their Communion as must necessarily exclude all other Christian Societies from it; and which their own spiritual Fathers and Governors have formally disown'd.

'Tis agreed on all Hands, that Baptism is necessary to qualify a Person for full Communion with any Church. This Rule hath been universally observ'd; this Discipline complied with ever since Christianity had a Being. As for the Protestant Churches beyond the Seas, they have no other than a Presbyterian Baptism and Ordination, whether *Calvinists* or *Lutherans*. Of the former there is no Question, nor can we doubt of the latter, if we believe their most celebrated Authors. To the Testimonies already produc'd, I shall only add those of *Chemnitius* and *Seckendorf*, one, the most exact Historian, the other, the most learned Disputant that the German Churches have produc'd. The first of these tells us,
" That

(a) *Seckendorf Hister. Lutheranis.* l. 3. sect. 20. p. 242.

(b) *Rational Account, &c.* p. 359.

“ That their *Romish* Adversaries did most uncharitably
 “ insist upon it, that they had no true Sacraments a-
 “ mongst ’em, because their Ministers were not ordain’d
 “ by Popish Bishops, that by such a Suggestion they did
 “ endeavour to cut the Throats of all their Churches,
 “ and totally subvert ’em (a). *Seckendorf* concurs with
 him in relating the same Objection of the Papists ; to
 which he answers, not by pretending to an uninter-
 rupted Succession of Prelates from the Apostles, but by in-
 sisting on it, (after his great Master *Luther*) “ That a
 “ Bishop’s Hand was not absolutely necessary to the
 “ Conveyance of Ministerial Authority (b). ’Tis re-
 markable, that these two great Men, as well as all the
 Advocates for *Luther’s* Reformation, acknowledge it to
 be matter of Fact, that their Ministers have no other
 than a Presbyterian Ordination ; but strenuously contend
 that this is sufficient : though they allow Episcopacy to
 be a prudential lawful Institution. So that our Secta-
 ries, by their new Scheme, exclude all the Protestant
 Churches on r’other Side the Water from their Com-
 munion : not one excepted.

Add to this, they may be justly charg’d with foment-
 ing Schisms in the Church of *England* it self. For, ac-
 cording to the great *Stillingsfleet*, they divide the Church by
 confining it. They set up a new Term of Communion,
viz. Episcopal Baptism ; not only without the Consent of
 their own Bishops and Governors, but most directly
 contrary to their constant Practice, and their most ex-
 press and formal Declaration. By such an unreasonable
 Limitation those Gentlemen excommunicate abundance
 of their own Clergy, besides vast Multitudes of the Laity,
 even such as pretend the greatest Zeal for the Establish-
 ment : They reject those whom their Spiritual Fathers
 are ready to receive, and thereby make a Separation in
 that Church with which they pretend to be united : They
 have in Truth receiv’d the very Schism of the *Donatists*.
 If you consult *St. Austin* or *Optatus*, you will find this
 to

(a) *Nostras Ecclesias semel jugulare, & funditus evertere co-
 nantur.* Chemnit. Exam. Conc. Trident. Pt. 2. p. 249.

(b) *Neque necesse est, ut hac per manus Episcoporum propa-
 gatur.* Huto. Lutheran. l. 3. p. 61.

to be the very Thing which those *African* Sectaries insisted on, that all such as came over to them should be rebaptized, as being no Christians (a). And what do our new Reformers aim at, but to revive these Errors which for so many Ages have lain buried with their Authors? In the mean time, when they make that a Term of Communion, which is not insisted on as such, neither by the Church of *England*, nor by any other established Church whatever, I would fain know, why we should not look upon them as an Upstart Sect, and Separatists from the whole Christian World?

VII. Another mischievous Consequence of this new Doctrine is, that it has a Tendency to weaken the Protestant Succession, as by Law establish'd in the House of *Hannover*. I am very well satisfy'd, that the Princes of that Illustrious Family have a just Respect for the Liturgy and Discipline of our Church; and are oblig'd by Law, if ever the *British* Crown devolves upon 'em, to live in Communion with it. I have been inform'd, that the Princess *Sophia* has the *English* Service usually read in her own Chapel: A sufficient Indication of that Respect which she has for it. However, neither she, nor any of her Family were ever validly baptiz'd in the Opinion of those I am writing against. They can't pretend in their Country to an Apostolical Succession of Bishops: And we are assur'd, by a *Lutheran* Divine of great Eminence, "That to this very Day, all their Ministers, whether Superintendents or mere Presbyters, are equal as to a Power of Ordaining (b). So that according to the Doctrine of our Innovators they can be no Christians; they are all, from the highest to the lowest of 'em, excluded the Church's Pale: And this is a very sorry Recommendation of a Successor, whenever it shall please God to deprive us of Her present Majesty.

C

(a) *Et dicitis non esse Christianos, & eos rebaptizare conamini.* August. Ep. 164. ad Emeritum.

Post nos rebaptizatis. Optat. Hist. Donatist. l. 2. sec. 9.

(b) *In hunc usque diem omnes evangelici Pastores, sive Superintendentes, sive simplices Presbyteri vocentur, quoad jus ordinandi sunt aequales.* Joach. Hildebrand, de Hierarch Vet. Eccles. p. 87.

jeſty. I wiſh that their having a Tendency to alienate Mens Minds from a Proteſtant Succeſſor, and reconcile them to a Popiſh Pretender, may not be one Reaſon why theſe Notions have been eſpous'd with ſo much Zeal.

VIII. But the greateſt Miſchief of all is, that the Practice of theſe Gentlemen renders every Man's Chriſtiani-ty precarious, and abſolutely uncertain. If their No-tions prevail, we are all left to God's uncovenanted Mercies, at leaſt, no Man living can have any Assurance to the contrary. After all that we have done or can do we muſt live in Uncertainties, and be haunted with perplexing Doubts : Which I thus prove : There are at this Day in the Church of *England* a great many Clergymen, who have had no other than a Presbyterian Baptiſm; and for ſcores of Years back there have been conſtantly ſome ſuch. Now if theſe are no Chriſtians, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould be Chriſtian Priests. Their Adminiſtrations are all Nullities ; and all thoſe who have been, either mediately or immediately baptiz'd by ſuch muſt be excluded the Goſpel Covenant. Before I can know my ſelf a Chriſtian, I muſt be ſure, that the Priest who baptized me, had himſelf an Episcopalian Baptiſm ; I muſt have the ſame Certainty in relation to his Baptizer, and ſo of all his Predeceſſors up to the Apoſtles themſelves. If there be but one broken Link it renders the whole Chain uſeleſs. Is there any one Man upon the Face of the Earth who can pretend to ſuch a Certainty as this ? Or can our Innovators themſelves have any other than an uncertain Title to the Chriſtian Name ? You ſee, Sir, into what a Labyrinth they have brought themſelves ; nor can they be diſengag'd but by renouncing their extravagant Principles.

The Author of *Lay Baptiſm invalid* being ſenſible of this Difficulty lying in his way, undertakes to remove it by pretending, That Baptiſm in a Goſpel Miniſter is only a Perſonal Qualification, as Temperance, Humility, &c. other Virtues are neceſſary indeed, in *Relation to himſelf*, to recommend him to God's Favour ; but that nothing is requiſite to render his Adminiſtration valid in *Relation to others*, ſave only that he has a lawful Com-miſſion, or in other Terms, that he be ordain'd by a Bi-ſhop : So that by virtue of this Commiſſion he may make
others

others Christians tho' he be none himself. This is the Sum and Substance of what is said by way of Answer to the last Objection.

To this I reply, that 'tis not only necessary that an Officer, sacred or civil, has a Commission; but that he be a Subject capable of being invested with it. Should a Bishop grant a Commission to a Woman to administer the Sacraments, this would be a perfect Nullity, because she is no fit Subject, her Sex incapacitates her for such a Grant. So in the present Case I must insist upon it, that a Bishop can't authorize one who is no Christian to officiate as a Christian Priest, or to administer the Sacraments: For, whatever Plenitude of Power there may be in the former, yet there is an essential Defect in the latter. But that it may not be said of me, that I assert without offering any Proof, I will produce the same Argument which these Gentlemen make use of in Defence of their Innovations.

The only Thing they urge for their surprizing Practice is, that such as are ordain'd by mere Presbyters have no Commission to baptize, and that for want of such a Commission their Baptism must be invalid. 'Tis none of my Business at present to examine the Truth of their first Proposition; but hope they will give me leave to raise my Argument upon the same Foundation with theirs, *viz.* the Necessity of a Warrant to authorize an Ecclesiastical Act. Now the Reply which these Gentlemen make to the last Objection may be thus confuted upon their own Principles:

If the Bishops have no Commission to ordain one that is not a Christian, then such an Ordination must be null; but the Bishops have no such Commission: Therefore, &c. The Consequence is their own, and therefore I hope they won't dispute it. That the Bishops have no Warrant to lay Hands upon one who is out of the Church may be thus fairly prov'd: Because no such Warrant is to be found either in the Statute-Law, or common Law of Christians. My Meaning is, either in the sacred Scriptures, or in the Practice of the Catholick Church.

If we consult the holy Scriptures, the great Charter of our Religion, we shall find nothing like a Commis-

on given to the Apostles or their Successors, to stamp the indelible Character upon an unbaptized Person: But the Power of receiving holy Orders is plainly limited to such as are within the Pale of the Church, as the only capable Subjects. To satisfy you on this Point I must desire you to peruse the Commission which our Saviour gave to his Apostles, and on which Christian Pastors found their Authority to minister in holy Things. You may read it *Matt. 28. 19, 20. Go ye and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the World.* Here you may observe, that the Apostles were oblig'd, first to teach and baptize, and then to take care for the perpetuating their Succession. Now had they any Warrant from these Words to communicate their Spiritual Authority to those who were not thus qualified? *Lo, I am with you* (says our Saviour) *to the end of the World*, with your Persons whilst living, to assist and bless you, and with those who, being taught and baptized, shall succeed you, in the Ministerial Function when you are dead. I am persuaded you will agree with me, that our Bishops can find nothing in these Words, like a Warrant for them to confer holy Orders upon one that is no Christian.

Let us next consider the Directions which *St. Paul* gave about this Affair, in his two famous Epistles to *Timothy*: Which sacred Records may not improperly be be fill'd those Credential Letters, by which the Ambassadors of the Prince of Peace are to govern themselves in the Execution of their Office. In the first of these Epistles he lays down the Qualifications required in a Gospel Minister: Amongst other things 'tis expressly said of him, * That he must *not* be a *Novice*, not a *νεοφυτευτος*, one newly planted in the Church, as the Greek Word properly signifies; not a *θεοφιλης*, as *Theophilact* (a) and other learned Commentators do very well expound it; that is one newly baptized. Now then, if *Timothy* was forbidden to lay Hands upon one but *late*ly baptized, we

* 1 Tim. 3. 6. (a) Vid. Suiceri Thesaur. Eccles. tom. 2. p. 395.

we may very well argue *a fortiori*, that he could have no Commission to ordain a Person who never was baptiz'd at all.

St. Paul in his Second Epistle unto *Timothy*, lays this Injunction on him: *2 Tim. 2. 2. The things that thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men; who shall be able to teach others also.* This has plainly a Relation to his settling Pastors and Teachers amongst his new Converts. The Persons to be employ'd in this awful Work were to be *faithful Men*. Now, Sir, if you have any Acquaintance with the History or Discipline of the Primitive Church, you must know, that tho' Persons were fully satisfy'd of the Truth of the Christian Religion, yet they were never before their Baptism, call'd by any other Names than those of Catechumens, or Candidates, (*Competentes*) and that none were reckon'd amongst the Number of the *Faithful*, but such as were in full Communion with the Church, and had participated of both the Sacraments. I might amuse you with Fathers and Councils on this Head; but shall only at present refer you for Satisfaction to Dr. Cave in his *Primitive Christianity*, pt. 1. c. 8. p. 219. Here you see *Timothy* had a Commission to put the Keys into the Hands of *faithful men*; but no Warrant to trust 'em with such as were no Christians.

If we consult the Practice of the *Apostles*, we shall find them pursuing that Method which was prescribed 'em by our Saviour, in the Text first cited by me. Thus, when the Disciples were dispers'd upon the Account of that raging Persecution that was stirr'd up against them, *Philip* the Deacon went down to *Samaria*, where he preach'd the Gospel with wonderful Success: And when they believ'd him preaching the Things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both Men and Women. Acts 8. 12. This being understood by the Apostles at *Jerusalem*, they sent down two of their own Number to 'em, *Peter* and *John*, who laid their Hands on some of these new Converts, and they receiv'd the Holy Ghost, v. 17. that is, (as Dr. Hammond observes upon the Place) "They ordain'd them Elders or Bishops in all their Cities, to rule them in the Faith, and in doing it they used that Ceremony

“ Ceremony of Imposition of Hands, and thereby was
 “ bestowed on them the Gift of the Holy Ghost, work-
 “ ing of Miracles, speaking with Tongues, &c. Here
 you see they were first baptiz’d, and then set apart to
 the Office of the Ministry, for which they were fitted
 and prepared by extraordinary Gifts. Nor is any thing
 to be found in all the Bible, which looks like a Warrant
 authorizing Bishops to lay their Hands upon one who
 is no Christian.

The Author of *Lay-Baptism invalid*, instances in
 St. Paul, who, as he says, was validly ordain’d before
 he was baptized (a). And this he thinks a Solution of
 the Difficulty.

But this Instance will appear nothing at all to the Pur-
 pose, if you consider that St. Paul had his Commission
 immediately from Jesus Christ, who appear’d to him in
 a miraculous Manner, and sent him to preach unto the
 Gentiles. The Question is not whether Christ may
 give Authority to an unbaptized Person to administer the
 Sacraments; but whether the ordinary Pastors of the
 Church may do it. Our Blessed Saviour is an absolute
 Sovereign, an uncontrolled Legislator, and may dis-
 pense with his own Laws whenever he thinks fit.
 Whereas subordinate Governors are ty’d up to Rules
 that they must walk by, and are oblig’d to keep within
 those Bounds that are prescribed ’em. To make *their*
 Acts authentick, tis requisite they should produce their
 Commission. Our Law determines that no Man shall
 bear Office in a Corporation, who has not, within the
 space of so many Months, receiv’d the Sacrament, ac-
 cording to the Form prescribed in the *Common Prayer*.
 However, the QUEEN and Parliament may, if they please,
 make him an Officer who is not thus qualified. But it
 by no means follows, that because our Legislators can
 do this, therefore a Judge or a Recorder may do so too.
 So in the Church an extraordinary Act of Christ him-
 self, who is the supream Head of the Church, is no
 Rule for his inferior Officers to measure their Autho-
 rity by.

I may

(a) Bishop of Oxford’s Charge consider’d. p. 60.

I may add, that this Instance of *St. Paul*, if apply'd to common Cases will ruin that very Cause for the Support of which it is produc'd. *St. Paul*, says the Author of *Lay-Baptism invalid*, had a Warrant to baptize whilst he himself was unbaptized: Therefore so may others as well as he. *S. Paul*, say I, had a Commission to preach and administer the Sacraments without the Imposition of an Apostle's or a Bishop's Hands, and therefore so may others too. I may defy that Gentleman to give any tolerable Reason why my Inference is not as good as his. But the Truth on't is, this was a miraculous and extraordinary Case, and not to be apply'd to the ordinary Affairs of Life. No Argument can be drawn from what Christ as King *once* did, to what Bishops who are but Subjects *commonly* may do. To what has been already said, I may subjoin this Consideration: That whatever *St. Paul* might have done, 'tis certain *de facto* he did not exercise any Part of his Apostolical Function before his Baptism. And if you consult the History of his Conversion you will find, that our Saviour upon his miraculous Appearance to him, bid him go into *Damascus*, and there all things should be told him, which were appointed for him to do: *Acts* 22. 10. When he came thither upon *Ananias* his Discourse with him, *he forthwith arose, and was baptized*, c. 9. v. 18. Which makes it probable, that he was commanded by our Saviour, *first* to be baptized, and *then* preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. And in this Case he seems to have no Commission to discharge the one, till he had complied with the other. However it be, this Instance will never authorize our Bishops to lay Hands upon one who is out of the Church.

Upon the whole, whether we consult the Practice of the Apostles, or that original Commission by which they acted, we shall find nothing in all the *Bible* that looks like a Warrant authorizing any Bishop whatsoever to confer holy Orders upon one that is no Christian: And by Consequence, according to the Logick of our Innovators, such an Act must be a mere Nullity. This is what will very nearly affect abundance of our Clergy, if not some of the Fathers of our Church.

I am

I am next to consider, whether there be any such thing to be found in the Practice of the Catholick Church, as a Bishop's laying on his Hands upon an unbaptized Person. You may depend upon it, Sir, that if such an Instance could be found, it would have been produc'd with a great deal of Ostentation. The Abettors of this new Notion are wont to argue thus: Mere Presbyters did not ordain in the primitive Church, therefore they had no Power of Ordaining. 'Tis none of my Business to dispute the Truth or Falshood of the first Proposition; but I hope they will give me leave to conclude, from their own Principles, that because Bishops in the primitive Church never did pretend to make a Priest of one who was no Christian, therefore they had no Commission to do such an Act. If the Inference be good in the first Case, 'tis so in the latter too. You may ransack the bulky Volumes of Fathers and Councils, without being able to find one Person admitted to minister at the Altar, before he had been wash'd or sprinkled with the Baptismal Water. The Silence of all Antiquity is as much as can be reasonably expected for a Proof of my Negative. But I do not despair of producing such positive Evidence as must give you entire Satisfaction.

To this Purpose I must speak of an Opinion that was pretty prevalent in the early Ages of the Church, *viz.* That a Man's Sins, tho' never so enormous, are all wash'd away in Baptism; and that Pardon for those committed afterwards, was not to be obtain'd without a great deal of Difficulty. Under this Persuasion a great many Persons delay'd their Baptism for many Years, and some till they were surpriz'd by a Disease suppos'd to be mortal, and then they would be baptiz'd in their sick Beds. Such as these were said to have a *Clinick* Baptism, from the *Greek* Word, which signifies a Bed. If they recover'd they were not re-baptiz'd; but at the same time they were not thought qualify'd for the Reception of holy Orders. Of this we have a remarkable Instance in *Eusebius*, the best and eldest of all our Ecclesiastical Historians. 'Tis that of the famous *Novatian*, who, when he came to be ordain'd a Presbyter, was vehemently oppos'd by the Clergy, and many of the People, alledging,

allegding, that it was not lawful to admit him into the Number of the Clergy who was baptiz'd upon his Sick-bed (a).

Now, Sir, if it was judg'd unlawful to ordain one who had a *Clinick* Baptism, could it be thought lawful to ordain him who had no Baptism at all? If so many Objections were rais'd against him for being baptized in his Bed, what Noise and Clamour would it have occasion'd had he neither been baptized there, nor in any other Place? The Council of *Neo-Cæsarea* decrees, that whosoever has a *Clinick* Baptism shall not be admitted to holy Orders (b). Do you think then that it would have allow'd Bishops to ordain those who had never been baptiz'd at all? I hope what I have said will satisfy you, that our Bishops can find nothing like a Commission to lay Hands on an unbaptiz'd Pagan, either in the Scriptures, or in the Practice of the primitive Church.

I may add to what has been already offer'd, that Reason it self will suggest so much to you: A Man must first be of the Church, before he can act as an Officer in it. Just as 'tis in the State; a Man must first be naturaliz'd before he can bear a Civil Office in the Kingdom. Should the Lord Chancellor put a *French-man* or a *Dutch-man* into the Commission of the Peace, this would be a mere Nullity: He must first be an *English-man* before he can be an *English Justice*. I confess, that the Study of *Littleton* and *Plowden* is none of my Profession, but can refer you to a Book pretty common in Gentlemens Libraries; 'tis *Manley's Interpretation of Law Terms*: Where, under the Word *Denizen*, he tells us, "That it signifies in Law, an Alien that is enfranchiz'd by the King's Charter, and enabled in all Respects almost to do as the King's native Subjects do, viz. to purchase and possess Lands, and to be capable of any Office or Dignity. Thus you see an Alien is incapable of bearing any Office in the State: And does not the same Reason hold in the Church? May I not conclude, that he who is an Alien from the Common-wealth of

D Israel

(a) *Euseb. Eccles. Hist.* l. 6. c. 43.

(b) *Conc. Neo-Cæ. Can.* f 12.

Israel can never be an Officer in Christ's Spiritual Kingdom.

To sum up what has been said on this Head, I must affirm, that according to the Principles of our *Re-baptizers*, no Man living can be sure of his Christianity. 'Tis certain, a great many of the present Clergy have no other than a Presbyterian Baptism; and some such there have constantly been these last hundred Years. All these, in the Sense of our charitable Gentlemen, are no Christians; and the same must be said of all those who derive their Baptism from such, which no Man can be sure he has not done. Nor is the Difficulty solv'd by pretending that a Bishop can authorize that Man to make others Christians who is not one himself: For our Prelates have no Commission for this, either in the Word of God, or in the Practice of the Catholick Church; and therefore, according to the avowed Principles of this new *Sect*, such an Act must be a mere Nullity.

IX. Another Objection against the Practice of these new Reformers is, that it is an Indignity to their Diocesan, and a publick Arraignment of his Lordships Conduct. I have heard indeed, that it has been alledg'd by Mr. *Read*, or his Friends, that when this Affair was first propos'd, his Lordship should tell him, that if he was satisfy'd with his Baptism, he would immediately confirm him; if not he would order him to be baptiz'd by a lawful Minister: Yea, that he would have honour'd the NEW CONVERT so far as to officiate himself, had there been a Font in his private Chapel. But all this must needs be mere Banter. Confirmation is the Bishop's particular Act; and can you, who have perus'd those excellent Treatises with which his Lordship has oblig'd the World, suppose him so mean a Casuist as to regulate his own Actions by another Man's Conscience? But I hope to convince you, that so eminent a Person cannot be tinctur'd with the lingy Notions of this new *Sect*.

In the first place I shall present you with his Lordship's Subscription to the Validity of such a Baptism as Mr. *Read* has thought fit to renounce. The Occasion was this: You may remember, that about four Years ago abundance of poor distress'd *Palatines* came over into *England*, where they met with a very kind Reception. Her
Majesty

Majesty sent abroad her Brieves to be read in all Churches and Meeting-Houses, exciting People to a liberal Contribution. With these Brieves the Bishop of E. sent a Letter, dated July 29, 1789, to the Minister of each Parish in his Diocese; in which a compassionate charitable Temper is discover'd. Amongst several other Expressions I have selected this that follows: "The Church of England hath been a Shelter to other neighbouring Churches, when a Storm hath driven 'em upon them. It was such in former Times, it hath been so of late, and I question not it will be so in this Instance, in an exemplary Manner. Here 'tis expressly said, the poor *Palatines* are an Instance of our affording Shelter to other Churches. His Lordship is too good an Historian not to know that the Protestants in the *Palatinate* are *Calvinists*, and have no other than a *Presbyterian* Baptism; and yet he gives it under his Hand that they are *neighbouring Churches*, which necessarily supposes them to be *Christians*.

This was yet more evident from the Office of Confirmation. I have been inform'd for certain, that there has not been in the Western Countries, within the Memory of Man, such crowding and thronging to be confirm'd as in his Lordship's primary Visitation. Amongst so many Thousands of all Ages and Conditions, it can hardly be suppos'd but that some should be born of Dissenting Parents, tho' they are now reconciled to the Church. I have already observ'd to you this following Prayer, which the Bishop puts up for every one on whom he lays his Hands: *Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy Servants by Water and the Holy Ghost, &c.* Now all Prayer must be in Faith. And can so good a Man as his Lordship put up this Petition for any Person without believing him to be really baptiz'd? Would he have repeated these Words over the Head of Mr. *Read* antecedent to his Rebaptization, as has been asserted, had he not been perswaded in his own Conscience, that Mr. *Read* was regenerated by Water, or in other Terms, that his Baptism was valid and authentick?

His Lordship has not only confirm'd, but ordain'd some or one who have had no other than a Presbyterian

Baptism. Of this, (a) Mr. Lob of Penzance is a living Instance when he had preach'd some Years amongst the Dissenters, thought it his Duty to conform to the Establish'd Church; upon which he had holy Orders conferr'd upon him. And can you imagine that the Bishop of Exon would have made him a Priest, had he not thought him to be a Christian?

To all that has been offer'd on this Head, I may add my Fears, lest our New Reformers have robb'd their Diocesan himself of his Christianity. My Reason is this: His Lordship, as I have been credibly inform'd, was born in the Parish of St. Gregories near St. Paul's London, in April 1655: and that his Name may be found upon the Parish Records, as baptized in that Month. 'Tis true, I can't name the Man who did officiate on that Occasion, but if you consult our *English Annals* you will find, that this was in the midst of Cromwell's Protectorship; and in the height of that Usurper's Greatness. And Doctor Heylin in his *History of the Presbyterians* tells us, "That the Episcopal Minister of St. Gregory's was sequestred, with many others, in the beginning of the Civil War, for his adhering to the King, against the Parliament (b). It can hardly be suppos'd he should be restor'd to his Benefice during Oliver's Administration, when you consider that inflexible Severity with which he kept under the Royal Party. So that his Lordship being born in a Parish out of which an Episcopal Clergy-man had been ejected, and in a time when the London Pulpits were generally fill'd with Presbyterian or Independent Ministers, I must leave it to you, whether this will not amount, tho' not to a Demonstration, yet to a high Probability that he had no better Baptism than what Mr. Read has been induced to renounce, as absolutely null. And now let the impartial world be judge, whether these Rebaptizers have done any

(a) This Gentleman is a Son of the late Mr. Stephen Lob of London; one of the most noted Dissenters in the Kingdom, and of the strictest Sort too.

(b) Page 456.

any real Service to the Church of *England*, by labouring to introduce such extravagant Notions as rob some of her most eminent Divines and Prelates of their very Christianity.

The Practice of these Gentlemen is an Affront to the University of *Oxford*. For the Proof of this I need only refer you to the Epistle sent by that learned Body, a few Years since, to the Professors of Divinity at *Geneva*. This Letter is directed to the reverend Pastors of the Church of *Geneva*. In which they thus express themselves: "The most celebrated of our Divines (say they) have always been far from pronouncing such a Sentence on your Church, viz. its being destitute of lawful Pastors and Sacraments rightly administered. This Letter was read and approv'd of in a general Convocation of Masters and Doctors: Feb. 5. 1706. They expressly own in it that the Citizens of *Geneva* are a Church, and have valid Sacraments among them: Tho' they are all *Presbyterians*, and have not had a Bishop there for 150 Years. But in Defiance to this solemn Determination of theirs, two or three Dogmatical Priests would fain persuade the World that these *Genevans* have no such Thing as a Church, a Minister or a Sacrament amongst 'em. These are the Men who must reform the World. Of these the Doctors and Prelates of the Church must learn their Catechism. What Pity 'tis that one of Mr. *Read's* Godfathers is not possess'd of the Divinity Chair, that the Presidents and Heads of Houses might be better inform'd of what is absolutely necessary to make a Man a Christian?

XI. The last Observation I shall make upon the late Practice of these Gentlemen, is its utter Inconsistence with their own Management upon other Occasions. If you consult the Office for the Ministration of Baptism, to such as are of riper Years, you will find the *Rubrick* directing the Godfathers and Godmothers to present the Persons to be baptized at the Font, immediately after the Second Lesson: And with this to be sure Mr. *Read's* Godfathers did punctually comply. As for one of these Gentlemen, as far as I can learn, he is not yet benefic'd; and therefore it cannot certainly be known what his Conduct may be. But as for Mr. *Walker*, he is Rector

or

or *Vicar* of a Parish, the most large and populous of any within the City Walls, in which are a great many dissenting Families. When any of these die, I cannot learn that he ever refus'd to read the Burial Office over 'em. In this Case indeed there is a happy Concurrence of Interest and Duty. Now that this is an absolute Contradiction to that Part he acted in Mr. *Read's* Affair, will appear, if you consider the *Rubrick* in the *Common-Prayer*, and his own Engagements to observe it. The *Rubrick* hath it thus: "Here it is to be noted, "that the Office ensuing is not to be us'd for any that "die unbaptiz'd or excommunicate, or have laid violent Hands upon themselves. And when this Gentleman was put into Possession of his Benefice, he (as all other Clergymen are oblig'd to do) made this solemn Declaration, in the Place of Publick Worship, before God and the Congregation: "I *J. W.* do hereby declare my unfeigned Assent and Consent to all "and every thing contain'd and prescrib'd in and by "the Book, entituled, *The Book of Common-Prayer and "Administration of the Sacraments, &c.* Now the fore-mention'd *Rubrick* is one of those Rules he has consented to be govern'd by. The Case therefore, in short, is this: Either he is perswaded in his own Conscience, that the Dissenters Baptism is valid, or that it is null and good for nothing. If he believes it valid, with what Conscience could he present Mr. *Read* at the Font in order to be re-baptiz'd, when he must needs know it to be a Profanation of a sacred Ordinance and a Practice condemn'd by the Universal Church?

But if on the other Hand, he is perswaded in his own Mind that such a Baptism is null, how can he read the Burial Office to such as he knows have had no other, and that in Contradiction to the Rubricks, to which he hath vow'd a strict Conformity? I wish this Gentleman would seriously reflect on the Scandal he hath hereby given to thinking Persons. Hath he not hereby strengthened the Hands of Infidelity? and open'd the Mouths of the *Deists*, and *Free-thinkers* of the Age? Will not these be ready to conclude, that Godliness is nothing but Gain, that all Religion is Banter and Priest-craft? What an *Idea* must these Men have of that holy Institution, of which

which our exalted Saviour was the Author, if a mourning Hatband, and a Piece of Money shall make that Man a Christian when dead, who had no Title to the Name, when living! Besides, this Gentleman, methinks, should have a little more consulted his own Reputation, now he is about to oblige the World with a new *Book of Martyrs*, of the Sufferings and Persecutions of the Episcopal Clergy, in *Cromwell's Days*. In that Piece no doubt we shall meet with many strange Stories and odd Adventures, such as will have nothing to support their Credit but the Honour and Veracity of the Relator: And will not the incredulous Fanaticks be ready to object, that his Testimony deserves not much to be regarded who will affirm one thing in the Parish-Church of *Heavy-tree*, and the quite contrary in the Church-yards of *Exon*? I hope therefore, that for the Honour of his Function, he will no more act a Part in such an inconsistent Farce.

There is one Circumstance more in this odd Story which deserves your Notice, and that in relation to the Lady who stood at the Font as a Godmother. She was born of Dissenting Parents, her Father, Mr. *Wyat* of *Somersetshire*, was a Gentleman eminently zealous for the Nonconformists Way of Worship. A Friend of mine assures me, that he has discours'd with an ancient Woman, who was a Retainer to the Family when Mr. *Read's* Godmother was born; and is very positive that she was baptiz'd by a Dissenting Minister. Nor could the Clergy-men concern'd be ignorant of this; for this Gentlewoman, before her Marriage, attended constantly on a Presbyterian Meeting, in the City of *Exon*. Now I appeal to you, whether a greater Absurdity was ever committed by Men pretending to Learning and Religion, than by these Gentlemen, who encourag'd Mr. *Read* to renounce his Baptism as absolutely null, and yet admitted a Gentlewoman to stand as Godmother at the Font, whose Baptism was as invalid as his own?

Thus, Sir, I have given you an Account of this odd Affair, and made a few Reflexions on it. I doubt not but you will find as great a Defect of Charity as Prudence in the whole Procedure. Their Design I suppose was to make the Dissenters odious: And in order hereunto,

unto, they have Paganiz'd all foreign Protestants; sapp'd the Foundations of their own Church; rendred every Man's Christianity precarious, and trifled with the most sacred Things. And is this to act like those who pretend to serve a God that can't be deceiv'd and will not be mock'd: Is this to act like the Ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, and the Successors to the Apostles, who have given us in charge, that nothing should be done through Strife and vain Glory?

I pray the God of all Grace to look down with Pity upon declining Religion, and pour forth upon all its Professors a Spirit of Love, of Peace, and of a sound Mind. I cannot conclude better at present than with the Collect appointed by the Church of England to be read upon the Sunday before Lent. --- *O Lord, who hast taught us, that all our Doings, without charity, are nothing worth, send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our Hearts that most excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace and of all Virtues; without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee: Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*



F I N I S.



